

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-02 SAA-01 SES-02 SSM-03 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9052
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4452

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, PLO
SUBJ: VIEWS OF PLO OFFICIALS ON RECENT AREA DEVELOPMENTS

1. REGULAR EMBASSY SOURCE MET WITH PLO OFFICIALS ABD
AL-RAZZAK YAHIA, DIRECTOR-GENERAL PLO POLITICAL DEPT;
JAMAL SURANI, FORMER PLO REPRESENTATIVE IN CAIRO BEFORE
HIS EXPULSION; AND ABD AL-KARIM KARMAH, AN AREA DIRECTOR
AT THE POLITICAL DEPT. THEIR VIEWS ON SEVERAL ISSUES
FOLLOW.

2. INTRA-PALESTINIAN FIGHTING. ALL WERE CONCERNED BY
FATAH-REJECTIONIST BLOODSHED AND SOMEWHAT CRITICAL
OF ARAFAT. KARMAH, A FAMOUS PALESTINIAN POET, WAS PAR-
TICULARLY UPSET BY ATTACK ON HANNA MIQBAL, THE PALESTINIAN
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WRITERS' UNION PRESIDENT MAQBAL, WHO IS A FATAH MAN CONSIDERED
CLOSE TO FATAH LEFTIST NAJI ALLUSH, AND KARMAH ASSUMED
THAT ARAFAT'S PEOPLE WERE BEHIND THE ATTACK. THEY COMPLAINED
ABOUT AUTOCRATIC METHODS OF ARAFAT BUT CONCEDED THAT HE
HAD SUFFICIENT STRENGTH TO PREVAIL WITHIN PLO COUNCILS.
YAHIA SAID THAT ARAFAT ONLY RARELY NOW CONVENED THE PLO
EXCOMM AND THEN ONLY TO RATIFY DECISIONS HE HAD ALREADY

REACHED. ARAFAT COULD DO THIS BECAUSE HE DOMINATED FATAH, AND FATAH UNDENIABLE DOMINATED THE MOVEMENT. THEY DID NOT EXPECT CURRENT FATAH-REJECTIONIST FIGHTING TO RESULT IN AN ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION.

3. SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON. ALL BELIEVED THAT SYRIA WOULD REMAIN IN LEBANON FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. YAHIA, A FORMER PLA COMMANDER RESPECTED FOR HIS MILITARY COMPETENCE, SPOKE HIGHLY OF THE SYRIAN ARMY CLAIMING THAT IT WAS NOW "THE BEST ARMY IN THE ARAB WORLD." HE SAID THAT SYRIA HAD SUFFICIENT WEAPONS ON HAND THEORETICALLY TO TREBLE THE NUMBER OF MEN IT HAD UNDER ARMS IF IT EVER CHOSE TO MOBILIZE THE COUNTRY'S POOL OF MILITARY AGE MEN AND RESERVES. IF THE SITUATION IN LEBANON BECAME TOO DANGEROUS FOR SYRIA, BETTING WAS THAT SYRIA WOULD PERMIT CIVIL WAR TO REIGNITE ON A LIMITED SCALE AFTER ARMING THE NASCENT ANTI-LEBANESE FRONT COALITION OF KARAMI, FRANGIEH, JUMBLATT, AND THE PPS.

4. FAHD'S VISIT. SURANI SURMISED THAT SADAT HAD LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR SAUDI RECONCILIATION ATTEMPTS BY EXPELLING THE ISRAELI MILITARY DELEGATION AND REFUSING ANOTHER DIRECT MEETING WITH THE ISRAELIS. HE BELIEVED THRUST OF FAHD'S MISSION WAS TO RECONCILE SYRIA AND EGYPT AND PLAY ITS "NATIONAL ROLE" NOW THAT CIRCUMSTANCES PERMITTED.

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5. SYRIAN-FATAH RELATIONS. ALL AGREED THAT A MARKED IMPROVEMENT HAD OCCURRED IN SYRIAN-FATAH RELATIONS AND THAT SYRIA AND THE NON-REJECTIONIST PALESTINIANS WERE NOW CLOSELY COOPERATING. (SEPARATE AIRGRAM FOLLOWS ON THIS SUBJECT.)
PELLETREAU

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